

to promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which  
where in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church;  
to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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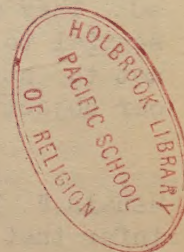
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## Objectives for Rural Christian Work

By W. A. Anderson\*



One day a young man asked the railroad agent in a small town for a ticket to Springfield. "Springfield? What Springfield?" replied the agent. "There are many Springfields; there is Springfield, Missouri, Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio; to what Springfield are you going?" The young man, not acquainted with the different Springfields, asked, "What Springfield is the closest?" Here was a man who was going some place, but he was not clear about where he was headed.

An important matter in any program of action is to be sure of the objectives and to vary from them only under necessity. This is as necessary for rural missions and the rural church as for any social enterprise. (A major part of our task is to be always aware of where we are going and to make everything operate to these ends.) We must have a clear vision of our goals before us. It is only then that we can gain them.

When I was in the sixth grade, my teacher used me as a model for our class in charcoal drawing. I stood on a table with an Indian club across my outstretched arm. I remember to this day her instruction to us "would-be" artists. She explained that we would have little success unless we kept our eyes fixed on the objective and let our hands be guided by the impressions we received.

If one takes his cue from Jesus, he can say that "the objective" of the Christian world program is two-fold: (1) to build in persons the highest qualities of righteous personality; and (2) to help establish in the world an ideal social order. Jesus was emphasizing this when he talked about the Kingdom of God on Earth. It is basic for us to make everything in the world program of Christianity work to these ends. But it is just as important for us to include in the program everything essential to these broad purposes. It is at this point that we find so much difference in rural church and mission programs.

\* Dr. Anderson is Professor of Rural Sociology at Cornell University and Rural Sociologist in the Cornell Agricultural Experiment Station. This article is a section of a forthcoming publication to be entitled, "Rural Missions Tomorrow", which is the result of Dr. Anderson's study of rural missionary programs and activities in the Middle East and Orient in 1947-48 under the auspices of Agricultural Missions, Inc.



Are there some basic essentials that we must be working toward in our Rural Church and Christian mission work if we are to reach these larger goals? Our thesis is that there are.

The essential elements in personality building and the construction of the best social order are not unusual things. In fact the essentials of our life are ordinary matters. The sunshine, the rain, the inevitable coming and going of the days and the seasons, not the cyclones or the hurricanes, are what are important for us over the long run. So, too, in our program of social and religious building, it is the ordinary matters of our living that are foundational. They usually control what occurs. In stating the specific objectives essential to the broader purposes of the church and missions, therefore, we stress not the striking but the usual. It is of chief importance for us to include in our objectives all the "essential usuals."

I must touch upon another thing before we consider these "essential usuals." It has to do with the order of their presentation. You are not to infer that because one objective is stated before another that it is of greater importance than the other. Our chief consideration is not the order of presentation but that each objective is fundamental. We cannot omit any one of them in a program of Christian world building. If any is omitted, our program is deficient by that much.

There are nine goals that we must include in our program of Christian World building if we are to achieve the Kingdom. The FIRST I present is that individuals must be made personally healthful and their environment sanitary. The problem of health always has two aspects. Many of us think only of the one: personal physical and mental well-being. Our Christians have been working everywhere through their hospital programs on personal health. We have achieved tremendously in this area. Our Mission doctors and Mission hospitals established modern health methods in the Orient.

Individuals without good health are of course not the best assets. It is true that many persons have achieved in spite of health limitations. Paul, for example, with his thorn-in-the-flesh, which may have been epilepsy. We must always remember, however, that instances of accomplishment without health are not numerous. They came in spite of, not because of ill-health. No one advocates poor health as a mode of developing personality. It is axiomatic that rich personality needs a foundation of robust health.

But many of us stop there. A suggestion may be made for missions at this point. A young missionary doctor in India who is now studying public health and sanitation in the United States says: "Our Missions will never get at the fundamental problems of health in the Orient through its hospital program. We must work more in community sanitation." He returns to the Orient to work in that field.

An illustration of this came to me in Lebanon. A colleague of mine went to Lebanon a few years ago to work with the Near East Foundation. He was to help villagers develop their fruit orchards. When he arrived in the villages he found the men saturated with malaria. They were unable to do effective work. So he decided to control the malaria by destroying the mosquitoes and their breeding places. He found the task almost impossible with the techniques and



materials then available. He gave up after only partial success.

On this present journey I visited the same villages. The mosquitoes were gone. Malaria had been lowered to a low incidence. The peasants were energetic. DDT had come to them through the sanitary officer of the Near East Foundation. His spraying in the village houses, on the marshes, and in the breeding places were effective controls. The people became new individuals. In fact, they called DDT the sleep-giving medicine. They said that until DDT was used, they had not enjoyed a whole night of comfortable rest. Other villagers sent delegations to get the sanitary officer to work with his spray equipment in their villages also. It is not hard to teach health to these villagers now. They see the results in the physical and mental life of their people. A knowledge of the germ theory of the cause of disease is a crying need among all Orientals. Our curative practices are good. But none of them can have as much influence as the spread of the knowledge, through practical demonstrations, of the cause of diseases by germs. If we are to have healthful individuals living in a healthful environment, it must be a foundation objective of our rural Christian program.

A SECOND end is the creation of work opportunities. People not only want to live, but to have some security in their living. The actions of most people are motivated by a chance to work, to earn, to save, so that they may get a decent level of living for themselves and those dependent upon them.

Everywhere the solution of this problem weighs heavily. One day I was riding in a rickshaw with a surgeon in the city of Kiukiang in central China. We noticed a Chinese get in a rickshaw and move along in the same direction we were traveling. Within a minute or two, I noticed that he appeared completely relaxed. His head dropped to his shoulders. His arms hung loosely by his side. He appeared to be sleeping. I had seen the same thing on a streetcar in Hangchow, only there the passenger put his coin in his ear and dropped off to sleep. The conductor plucked the coin from its resting place without disturbing the passenger.

I asked the surgeon whether the Chinese had learned the art of throwing off their worries and conserving their strength through such relaxation. He said that many had. The willingness to accept things as they come that is seen in the East is a reaction, in part, to the difficulties of earning food, clothing, and shelter, he said. Orientals compensate with a fatalistic acceptance reaction. They say it is the way of the Gods. When such a view is too deeply ingrained in them, constructive work with them is difficult.

But the surgeon pointed out that many worry. When they appear to relax as in the rickshaw and the street-car, it is often just mental and physical exhaustion. The surgeon pointed out that he treated many persons under anesthetics. Here where their subconscious mind is free to express itself without restraint, the conversation is about food, ways of earning their living, the problems of their livelihood. The pressure of getting food from day to day is terrific and the schemes of the peasant to solve this run from work to banditry. The Chinese have a proverb which shows the importance they place on having food and shelter. They say: "It is hard to tell the difference between right and wrong when food, clothing, and shelter are not enough." Even in meeting a friend, this pressure shows itself. One of the greetings of the



Oriental is: "Have you eaten rice today?" It is a Christian obligation to help these people solve their economic problems. One of the best ways we can give help to the spiritual lives of the fifty to sixty million Indian people, for example, who are estimated never to have had enough to eat, is to help them earn or to earn more.

The THIRD objective is to create avocational opportunities. Often I have asked myself, as I have gone through village after village or down a city street and watched people working into the late night, what fun do these folks get from living? Living should be pleasurable. It ought to include things that are done just for the sheer joy we get from them. How much pleasure can a man, hitched to a load of logs like a draft animal and pulling until he is "dog tired", get out of life? No wonder people gamble, drink, indulge in any little activity that offsets work and monotony.

When Jesus was too much fed up with his work, he went to the home of his friends for a vacation. The word "vacation" has no meaning for millions upon millions of peasants in this world. They must get little pleasures as they go along from day to day. There is no retiring for them to the other side of the lake when they get tired. They have to "fish" every day, hot or cold, summer or winter, if they are to eat. An aim of the Christian program must be to teach how to get enjoyment in the midst of monotony and work.

This problem will increase as industrialization increases. The work of the world is moving into even more monotony. Machine operations mean more routine for workers. Eventually our work days will be shorter. More routine and shorter work days require a better use of our leisure time to contribute wholesomely to personality. In no area of human life have we done so little constructive teaching as in avocations. I do not believe in turning back the pages of time. But the Greeks knew that happy citizens need leisure-time interests. While their activities are not now applicable except in part, their ideas about avocations are sound. A Christian world must be a pleasurable world. We must include this in the program.

The FOURTH objective for our Christian world building must be the spread of knowledge. So far as most of the people go, the uppermost problem is to teach them the tools of knowledge. With eighty to ninety percent of the people in many lands still illiterate, it is clear that little beyond teaching them how to read and write can be done until they are literate. A curious thing is that there is now so much illiteracy among people who have histories of great cultural achievement running back for so long a time. The Chinese have emphasized knowledge from earliest times. A stumbling block to its spread has been the difficult symbol system they use. One wonders whether they can make progress, in spite of their one thousand character systems and mass education, until they simplify their symbols. Among other people too, knowledge has been promoted and in times past they have made some brilliant contributions to the store of world information and insight. The Syrians have a proverb which says: "Get knowledge even if you have to go to China for it." But the Oriental people have seldom been able to follow this advice. Their social and religious systems with their rigid separations are responsible for this condition.

The fact that people cannot read and write must not lead us to the conclusion that they are mentally limited. Basic intelligence is not a matter of reading and writing. The author met many peasants with profound wisdom who



could not write their own names. But what a narrow world they live in because they cannot use any symbols except those of sound to get and to transfer ideas. This, of course, is the great value in education. It enlarges the limits of the world in which a person lives to any scope that he wishes. The goal of the knowledge objective is to help people live in an ever-widening universe and to help foster increasing appreciation of a profoundly fascinating world.

The FIFTH end to be promoted in Christian work is beauty. What an ugly spectacle man has made of an aesthetically pleasing world. There are spots where we may enjoy beauty, to be sure. But they are usually to be found either in special developments man has made or in places that his hands have not spoiled.

In an Indian village where I was visiting with Dr. Gadgil, Director of the Gokale Institute at Poona and some other friends, we noticed that the village streets were all swept and clean. This was unusual. The villagers had made an attempt to make the place orderly and attractive. We had come to the village unannounced, so it could not have been done for us. Dr. Gadgil said to me, "I am going to find out why these streets are so clean and things so orderly." A young man was sitting on a wall in front of one of the houses. Dr. Gadgil dropped back and said to the young man, "How does it happen that your village streets are all clean and orderly today? Are you expecting some visitors?" "Oh, no," the young man replied, "the foreign lady who lives in the house with the vines and flowers keeps such a pretty place, and she says we should clean our streets and make the village nice, that now we sweep the streets every day." This missionary lady, spending her last term in this tumbled-down place, was hardly aware that her aesthetically-pleasing house and garden were having their influence on the beauty and order of the people about her.

There is one thing with which we must credit the Japanese. They emphasize the beautiful. We may not like their form of expression but it gives them emotional satisfaction. If cleanliness is next to Godliness, I think we must give third place to beauty. Yet, just unconsciously we forget it until our environment takes on an ugliness that depresses. I remember reading an article some years ago in which the author was describing the haphazard way, with little or no attention to beauty, in which we allow our cities and their rural surroundings to develop. After emphasizing his dissatisfactions and our general unconcern, he wound up with the cryptic statement, "Now look at the blasted thing!" I have seen some of the world's celebrated beauty spots on my journeys, but I have seen ugliness too, both of environment and of people, that make me deeply sorrowful. This cannot be a part of the Kingdom on Earth.

The SIXTH objective is to establish right social relations between men. I have often read Paul's statement that faith, hope and love are the greatest qualities of an individual. I certainly would not say that he was wrong and something else relative to the person more important. But I have seen something as I have gone around this planet that makes me want to emphasize another trait, namely, respect. I have been in places where men neither love their fellow-men, nor do they have respect for them. When a people have allowed their social organization to develop so that they do not respect their fellow-men but consider and treat them worse than they do the beasts of the field, their society has reached an all-time low in human relationships. A mother may never cease to love her child. But if she loses respect, she finds it almost impossible to make love work. When a society ordains some people to a sub-human role so that there can be no social intercourse of an intimate, helpful kind with them, that



society cannot make love work. The greatest lesson in the Christian gospel, and the one with more force in it than in any atomic bomb, is the simple idea that, in the sight of God, and therefore in the sight of men, any person of whatever creed, color, race, or caste has an infinite worthwhileness. If we follow this idea, it will truly turn our world upside down.

The SEVENTH objective is the establishment of right relations within the family. Confucius has said that if you want to control a society, control its families. Sociologists still recognize the happy family as the chief unit of social organization. Where the family does not operate well, the rest of the society degenerates. All through the Orient and Middle East areas where I have traveled recently, Egypt, Syria, India, China, the impact of rapid social change is influencing the control of their families. Domestic discord increases as youth challenges the authority of parents and as wives seek freedom and better living conditions. This aged but never obsolete institution remains as a chief spiritual foundation of any nation. It is crucial in rural Christian work to help develop it as a group of wholesomely interacting persons.

The EIGHTH goal is the establishment of right social relations within and between communities. Today rapid means of communication and transportation are bringing the communities of the world into constant contact with each other. Many people have assumed that this frequency of association within and between communities means the elimination of competition and conflict. There are many evidences that frequent contacts often lead to alienation between communities. As contacts increase cultural conservatism asserts itself as a way of self-preservation. The measure of community development is not just in the number of contacts people have. It lies in the quality of the responses people enjoy. The goal of community relationships is the achievement of healthy socialization, the elimination of devastating strife, and the development of the spirit of tolerant cooperation. This goal, too, is essential to rural missions and rural church work.

The NINTH goal is the establishment of right relations to God. Many would put this objective first. I put it last. It is the dynamic that makes our other objectives practically possible. Without right relations to God, man's efforts are ineffectual. A fable tells of a Greek God sending forth such beautiful music from his mountain organ that the peasants in the valley below moved closer to enjoy it. One day this God left his home. Men sought to play the organ alone. But the results were so harsh that the peasants moved rapidly away. Then the God returned and again the harmonious results came. The peasants moved back to the mountain's feet. Thus it always is. God working through the lives of men gives constructive results, for only through this spiritual dynamic are man's efforts effective. A Chinese proverb sums it up: "If there is righteousness in the heart there will be beauty in the character. If there be beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world."

By way of summarizing these objectives that we must ever keep clearly before us, I would like to ask you a question: What kind of a world would this be, if the people in it were (1) physically and mentally healthful and the environment in which they live a sanitary one; (2) if these people had work from which they earned enough to give themselves and those dependent upon them a good standard of living and by which they were adding to their society's well-being;



(3) if they had avocations from which they were getting happiness; (4) if they had the tools of knowledge and skills in their execution so that they could understand and enjoy the world in which they live; (5) if they and their surroundings were aesthetically pleasing; (6) if they lived in right relations to each other; (7) within the family; (8) and between the communities, and (9) if they lived in right relations to God? If we reach these objectives, we will have no less than the Kingdom of God on Earth. Without these objectives we will never gain the Kingdom.

But at once I hear the reaction: idealistic, utopian, impractical. The Christian world program must be idealistic, utopian. Jesus was an idealist. He never quit emphasizing the establishment of the Kingdom on Earth. Yet he sought its actual achievement in most practical ways. It is true that in practice, the problems of those who guide programs is to select the activities that can be realized, but they must always be a step toward these final objectives. It is true that we must make accommodations and adaptations. Nevertheless to keep our eyes glued on the final goals is to assure moving step by step toward them.



